

### About the Canadian Mountain Network

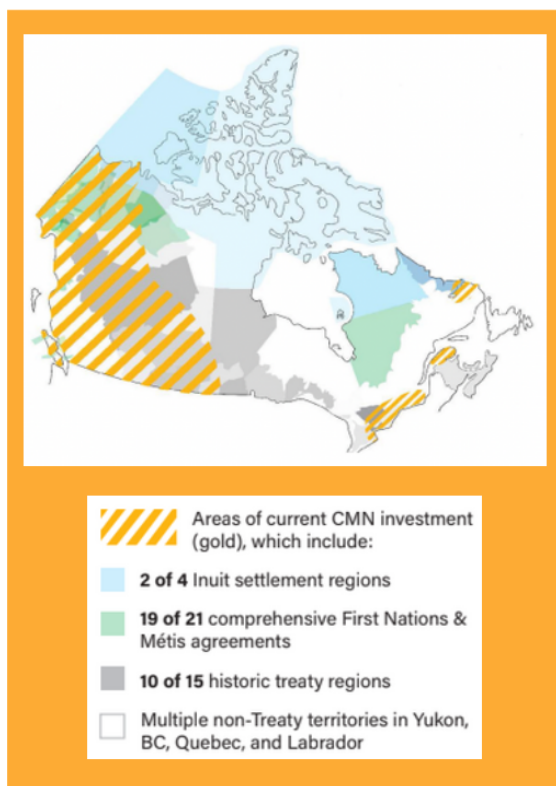
Since its launch in 2019 as a not-for-profit organization primarily funded by the Government of Canada's Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) program, the Canadian Mountain Network (CMN) has mobilized a community of Indigenous leaders, researchers and organizations who share a commitment to improving the resilience of mountain peoples and places. CMN is now on the ground developing and applying innovative methods to harness both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing to benefit mountain peoples and places. These models are relevant not only for mountain regions, but for all landscapes. As a result, our work benefits from the sharing of knowledge and practices with an increasingly diverse community across Canada.

Our approach to research, training, and mobilizing knowledge focuses on working for and with communities and other knowledge users across sectors in order to achieve better environmental, economic, social, and health outcomes for all Canadians. With innovative approaches to governance, programs, and partnerships, the Network has developed a highly successful model for *Reconciliation through Research*. We are committed to advancing and accelerating the process of reconciliation by harnessing environmental knowledge to inform policy and decision-making that better reflects the diversity of knowledge systems in Canada. Guided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, CMN is changing how environmental research is done in Canada.

We were the first organization of our kind in Canada to directly fund projects led by Elders and Knowledge Holders working on behalf of Indigenous organizations. This support has grown as our organization has matured. Today, the majority of CMN's research investments support Indigenous-led or co-led projects and initiatives. We

have also continued to focus on the questions and needs of a wide range of knowledge user groups across sectors. This ensures that research outcomes are relevant to real world challenges and opportunities. For example, our suite of Knowledge Hubs engages 50 businesses, 42 post-secondary institutions, 34 Indigenous and not-for-profit organizations, and 24 federal, provincial and territorial departments and agencies. Current projects and initiatives led or supported by CMN cover a wide range of themes, including advancing the concept of Ethical Space for knowledge co-production, climate change adaptation, sustainable development, Indigenous conservation, species restoration, environmental and health monitoring, and the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in assessments.

Mountains are intrinsically connected to diverse places and peoples across Canada, whether through watersheds, rivers, or the movement of wildlife. As a wide range of partners have emphasized the importance of our work to other landscapes, we are now proposing to follow those connections. Specifically, we have proposed an organizational evolution at the end of CMN's current federal grant in March 2024 that would facilitate new partnerships that ensure the continued impact of our existing investments and relationships.



*This is the moment to move faster on the path to reconciliation.*

*[...]*

*Our Earth is in danger. We must move talk into action and adapt where we must. We cannot afford to wait.*

2021 Speech from the Throne delivered by Canada's first Indigenous Governor General,  
Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon

## Strategic Evolution: Canadian Mountain Network ⇒ Braiding Knowledges Canada

Changes to our environment - our climate, lands, waters, and wildlife - are occurring before our eyes, including the fading eyes of our Elders and the wide-open eyes of our youth. Understanding our collective and diverse circumstances of vulnerability and resilience to environmental change in order to transform our societies to a more sustainable and just future is the grand challenge of our time. The decisions that we make today will have a profound impact on the collective health and well-being of generations to come.

CMN's national community of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, trainees, and knowledge users from across sectors (e.g. government, industry, not-for-profits) is defined by its optimism and bias to action. We believe that we can expand our knowledge base and understand and apply existing knowledge more effectively to address the challenges that we face. In recent years, Canada has made bold pledges to advance reconciliation and sustainable development. In many areas, such as efforts to co-design implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals, we see a growing recognition of the interconnectedness of all people and nature. We also see ambitious environmental targets being supported by innovative capacities (e.g. Indigenous Guardians programs). CMN is exploring an evolution that would maximize our contribution to this urgent effort to advance reconciliation, as well as better understand and respond to environmental change. In so doing, we will build on CMN's strengths while addressing a critical gap in Canada's research ecosystem.

### Alignment of CMN's research with national & international priorities



Truth and Reconciliation Commission of  
Canada's Call to Action



United Nations Declaration on the Rights of  
Indigenous Peoples



United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



Conservation of 30% of Canada's lands and  
waters by 2030



Full recovery for nature by 2050



Net-zero emissions by 2050

In January 2022, CMN submitted a proposal to the Government of Canada's Strategic Science Fund (see competition details in the next section). This proposal would see our organization transition to a new identity at the end of its current federal grant in March 2024: **Braiding Knowledges Canada**. The organization would also enhance its impact by broadening its reach to landscapes across Canada. This would respond to the many individuals and organizations outside of mountain regions that want to participate in our work. This expanded scope would allow us to grow our significant investments in mountain regions, while also supporting the sharing of best practices across Canada. BKC will benefit from CMN's experience and relationships as it works to enable exchange between the production and use of Indigenous and Western knowledges to support evidence-informed decision-making. Further, we will build on CMN's demonstrated commitment to advancing Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Our SSF proposal includes commitments to increasing Indigenous Board membership to 50%, maintaining the important role of the Board's Indigenous Circle of Advisors, and ensuring diverse representation of genders, languages, knowledge systems, career-stages, user-sectors, and geographies in both the organization's governance and its management.

## Braiding Knowledges Canada

### Our Desired Outcome

The influence of self-determined, place-based, and co-produced knowledge within Canada's science culture is significantly enhanced such that, over time and on a path towards reconciliation, local knowledge approaches contribute more to public policy and decision-making and become more fully and equitably reciprocal with federal science initiatives

### Our Mutually-Reinforcing Objectives

**Research to Advance Canada's Environmental Priorities:** Advance through the braiding of knowledges understanding of rapid and uncertain environmental change to inform the conservation, restoration, and regeneration of the health and wellness of all our relations.

**Innovative and Effective Knowledge Mobilization:** Advance new approaches to the mobilization of braided knowledges to inform and influence policy in Canada, including and especially federal policy.

**Developing Talent and Building Capacity:** Create training, education, and learning opportunities to develop talent in ethical and effective knowledge braiding while promoting land and cultural connection, and advancing Indigenous-led, community-based research and training capacities.

### Our Core Value: All Our Relations

We recognize that different peoples have different ways of knowing, doing, and being and we acknowledge, promote, protect and respect this diversity. We are connected to, dependent on, and responsible for each other and for the land, water, plants and animals that sustain us. We are committed to building trusting, authentic relationships and inclusive, decolonizing practices so that we can learn and grow together on the path towards reconciliation.

## Strategic Science Fund Opportunity

In January 2022, CMN submitted a Letter of Intent (LOI) to the Government of Canada's Strategic Science Fund (SSF). "Science" is defined broadly within the program and is inclusive of Indigenous knowledge. Led by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, the SSF is designed to support research, training, and knowledge mobilization initiatives that are led by not-for-profit organizations.

In addition to adding value to federal science, technology and innovation investments, the SSF program aims to support organizations with a national presence and demonstrable impact. It also seeks to advance initiatives that offer strategic value aligned with core federal responsibilities and priorities. Our SSF LOI aligns with a wide range of federal priorities that have been clearly communicated in the 2021 Speech from the Throne and Ministerial Mandate Letters. It is also aligned with the Government of Canada's response to the 2017 Fundamental Science Review, which included the development of an Indigenous research and training strategy by the Canada Research Coordinating Committee. In addition, the LOI aligns with priorities that are shared with National Indigenous Organizations, CMN's Indigenous community partners, and many of the Network's other partners across sectors (e.g. provincial/territorial governments, industry, not for profits). These shared priorities include taking action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action and the co-design of an UNDRIP implementation plan, as well as achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## SSF Program Objectives

### Research

Increase the quality of internationally competitive, leading-edge research in areas critical to the health, economic and social well-being of Canadians.

### Talent

Develop, attract and retain world-class research and innovation talent in scientific areas that are aligned with Canada's priorities.

### Knowledge Mobilization

Accelerate the exchange of research results and the translation of this knowledge into action in Canada and abroad.

### Culture

Strengthen evidence-based decision-making, innovation skills development and science culture.

As an independent not-for-profit organization, CMN is uniquely positioned as a convenor and connector. BKC will continue this legacy by brokering new partnerships that advance ethical knowledge co-production between Indigenous and Western ways of knowing, as well as creating new mechanisms to apply knowledge to policy. CMN's flexibility, national scope, and demonstrated record of generating innovative cross-sector partnerships will support the rapid launch and scaling of BKC and its activities.

CMN and its wide range of partners are confident that the Government of Canada will share our excitement for this opportunity and support the proposed work with substantial, long-term resources. Based on CMN's demonstrated record of leveraging significant cash and in-kind resources to support its federally-funded activities, our SSF LOI requests an estimated \$81MM, 5-year grant (2024-2029). It is anticipated that these funds will be matched by BKC's partners and collectively these resources will help expand the scope, scale, and impact of our work.

## BKC's Proposed Activities

We anticipate engaging more than 200 knowledge user organizations and other partners across Canada in BKC's research, training, and knowledge mobilization activities. In addition, several hundred researchers and trainees will be actively involved and will represent diverse knowledge systems, career stages, and research interests. Thousands more will benefit from many of our cutting-edge, highly accessible Training and Knowledge Mobilization activities. Our strategic approach is centred on three programs described below.

### Research

BKC will support projects and initiatives that are: (1) place-based (i.e. consider the complex and interdependent relationships between humans and their non-human natural environment); (2) action-based (i.e. leads to on-the-ground change while advancing understanding); and, (3) led by, or in knowledge co-production partnerships with, Indigenous communities.

We will maintain and improve the highly successful and innovative processes established to support the design, evaluation, and collaborative development and growth of CMN's 7 Knowledge Hubs across Canada.

**Proposed Activities:** (1) Sustain & Expand Indigenous-led & Co-led Environmental Knowledge Hubs (including an Indigenous Guardians Hub); (2) Support Distinctions-Based First Nations, Métis & Inuit Research and Knowledge Hubs to advance self-determined research, training, and knowledge mobilization priorities and capacities; (3)

Strategic Connector Initiatives to maximize the impact of investments and disseminate findings nationally and internationally; and, (4) Academic Research Chairs to build Reciprocal Capacity through Knowledge Hubs in partnership with Fulbright Canada to facilitate international talent exchange, support relevant academic capacity-building, and create mentorship opportunities for trainees.

### Training & Capacity Building

BKC will offer land-based, community-based, and institutionally-based offerings to ensure Canada's diverse research talent can work effectively and respectfully with different ways of knowing. Our approach includes both experiential and more conventional learning opportunities that respond to the distinctive context, needs, and interests of participants.

**Proposed Activities:** (1) Land-based learning programs that supporting the next generation of Indigenous Guardians and honour Indigenous knowledges, cultures, and languages, including programs that offer credentials from post-secondary institutions, Indigenous organizations, and other partners ; (2) Expand the scope and scale of Mitacs-funded research internships and postdoctoral fellowships by providing matching funding to support Indigenous leadership and engagement in projects ; (3) International youth exchanges and skills development programs in collaboration with the US National Science Foundation-funded Mountain Sentinels Collaborative Network and the international Youth Environmental Alliance in Higher Education; (4) collaborations with ECO Canada, including employment training/certifications through that organization's BEAHR Indigenous workforce program and wage subsidies provided to employers for researchers and trainees working on BKC-funded projects and initiatives ; and (5) Leveraging CMN's internal workshops and educational resources to provide broadly accessible in-person and online Ethical Space training opportunities that enhance awareness and skills related to ethical knowledge sharing and co-production.

### Knowledge Mobilization

BKC will build on CMN's strengths in bridging knowledge to decision-making and action, as well as advancing ethical principles for knowledge sharing and knowledge co-production.

**Proposed Activities:** (1) Supporting sharing circles and knowledge exchange between knowledge user organizations/policymakers and researchers, trainees, and local communities; (2) Facilitating neutral, high-level dialogue between those with a seat at tables where key relevant policy decisions are made (e.g. Indigenous leaders and federal elected officials/departmental executives); (3) Funding to coordinate and mobilize the research, expertise, and partnerships of BKC to support Indigenous community requests for capacity to respond to specific federal policy consultation opportunities (e.g. legislation, regulations, program design, impact assessments, etc); and, (4) Marketing and communications activities and events that will maximize the reach and influence of our work, including custom BKC platforms (e.g. websites, video, podcasts, webinars, events, social media) and leveraging platforms of media and other strategic partners (e.g. Canadian Geographic, Reconciling Ways of Knowing Forum, Canadian Science Policy Centre).

### Get Involved

We hold a collective responsibility to move forward together in a better way. This requires organizations and partners to work together with a shared commitment to a vision for a better future.

We are grateful to those who have contributed on our journey thus far, and we are excited by the opportunities in front of us as we plan for a new phase. If you would like to learn more about the Canadian Mountain Network, our Strategic Science Fund proposal, or our vision for Braiding Knowledges Canada, visit our website or email [admin@cmn-rcm.ca](mailto:admin@cmn-rcm.ca).